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Tecumseh's Confederacy

By ELMORE BARCE, Fowler, Indiana.

RESULTS OF THE TREATY OF FORT WAYNE.

THE Treaty of Fort Wayne having been consummated and certain disputes relative to horse-stealing and other depredations having been arranged between the two races, the governor, on the fourth of October, 1809, set out on his return to Vincennes. He traveled on horse-back, accompanied by his secretary and interpreter, passing through the Indian villages at the forks of the Wabash and striking the towns of the Miamis at the mouth of the Mississinewa. Here dwelt John B. Richardville, or Peshewah, a celebrated chief of that tribe, who was later chosen as principal sachem on the death of Little Turtle. Richardville had not been personally present at Fort Wayne, but he now received the governor cordially, and gave his unqualified approval to the previous proceedings.

The day before his arrival at Peshewah's town, the governor met with a singular experience, which not only served to illustrate the advancing ravages of liquor among the tribes, but Harrison's intimate knowledge of Indian laws, customs and usages. On coming into the camp of Pucan, a Mississinewa chieftain, he discovered that one of the warriors had received a mortal wound during a "drunken frolic" of the preceding evening. The chiefs informed him that the slayer had not been apprehended, whereupon the governor recommended that if the act "should appear to have proceeded from previous malice," that the offender should be punished, "but if it should appear to be altogether accident to let him know it and he would assist to make up the matter with the friends of the deceased."¹ This payment of wergild or "blood-money" among the Indian tribes in compensation of the loss of life or limb, is strongly in accord with the ancient Saxon law, yet it seems to have prevailed as far back at least as the time of William Penn, for in one of his letters describing the aborigines of America, he says: "The justice they (the Indians)

¹ *Treaty of 1809. Official Proceedings. State Library, 23-24.*

have is pecuniary; in case of any wrong or evil fact, be it murder itself, they atone by feasts and presents of their wampum, which is proportioned to the offense, or person injured, or of the sex they are of; for, in case they kill a woman, they pay double, and the reason they render, is that she can raise children, which men cannot do.”² Later on, at Vincennes, the governor had another and similar experience which affords additional proof that the custom above mentioned was still prevalent. A Pottawattomie chieftain from the prairies came in attended by some young men. He found there about one hundred and fifty of the Kickapoos, who were receiving their annuity, and he immediately made complaint to the governor as follows: “My father,” said he, “it is now twelve moons since these people, the Kickapoos, killed my brother; I have never revenged it, but they have promised to cover up his blood, but they have not done it. I wish you to tell them, my father, to pay me for my brother, or some of them will lose their hair before they go from this.” The governor accordingly advised the chief of the Kickapoos to satisfy the Pottawattomie. On the following day the latter again called upon the governor, and said: “See there, my father,” showing three blankets and some other articles, “see what these people have offered me for my brother, but my brother was not a hog that I should take three blankets for him,” and he declared his intention of killing some of them unless they would satisfy him in the way he proposed. The governor, upon inquiry, finding that the goods of the Kickapoos were all distributed, directed, on account of the United States, a small addition to be made to what he had received.”³

At the villages on Eel river the governor met with certain of the Weas of the lower river region, and dispatched them to summon their chiefs to meet with him at Vincennes and ratify the treaty. He arrived at the latter place on the twelfth of October, having been absent for a period of about six weeks, and found that the complete success of his mission had restored in large measure that popularity which he had beforetime lost on account of his advocacy of slavery. The acquisition was heralded far and wide as a measure calculated in all respects to forward the interests of the Territory. Not only was the total domain acquired, vast in extent and acreage, (being computed at about 2,600,000 acres), but it was considered extremely

² *History of the Shawnee Indians*, by Henry Harvey, a member of the Society of Friends. Cincinnati, 1855. 20.

³ *Dawson's Harrison—Appendix*. Note VI.

fertile, well watered, and as containing salt springs and valuable mines.⁴ Once the Weas and other tribes were removed from close proximity to the settlements, it was confidently expected that the old clashes would cease and that the new territory would be speedily surveyed and opened up for entry and purchase to within twelve miles of the mouth of the Vermillion. The Indians also, seemed well satisfied. The Pottawattomie had been urgent; Richardville, Little Turtle and all the Miamis had given their consent; the Weas and Kickapoos were about to ratify. Nothing was then heard of the pretensions of the Shawnee Prophet or his abler brother. In a message to the territorial legislature in 1810, reviewing the events of this period, Harrison said:

It was not until eight months after the conclusion of the treaty, and after his design of forming a combination against the United States had been discovered and defeated, that the pretensions of the Prophet, in regard to the land in question, were made known. A furious clamor was then raised by the foreign agents among us, and other disaffected persons, against the policy which had excluded from the treaty this great and influential character, as he is termed, and the doing so expressly attributed to the personal ill-will on the part of the negotiator. No such ill-will did in fact exist. I accuse myself, indeed, of an error in the patronage and support which I afforded him on his arrival on the Wabash, before his hostility to the United States had been developed. But on no principle of propriety or policy could he have been made a party to the treaty. The personage, called the Prophet, is not a chief of the tribe to which he belongs, but an outcast from it, rejected and hated by the real chiefs, the principal of whom was present at the treaty, and not only disclaimed on the part of his tribe any title to the lands ceded, but used his personal influence with the chiefs of other tribes to affect the cession.⁵

The "principal chief" of the Shawnees above alluded to was undoubtedly Black Hoof, or Catahecassa who at this time lived in the first town of that tribe, at Wapakonetta, Ohio. Being near to Fort Wayne he had no doubt attended the great council at that place. He had been a renowned warrior, having been present at Braddock's Defeat, at Point Pleasant, and at St. Clair's disaster. But when Anthony Wayne conquered the Indians at Falling Timbers, Black Hoof had given up, and he had afterward remained steadfast in his allegiance to the United States government. When Tecumseh afterwards attempted to form his confederacy, he met with a firm and steady resistance from Black Hoof, and his influence was such that

⁴ Vincennes *Western Sun*, Oct. 21, 1809.

⁵ *Dawson's Harrison*, 166; Vincennes *Western Sun*, Dec. 8, 1810.

no considerable body of the Shawnees every joined the Prophet's camp. Black Hoof died in 1831 at the advanced age of one hundred and ten years, and tradition says that like Moses, "his eye was not dim; nor his natural force abated." The fact that Black Hoof, who was of great fame among his tribe, as both orator and statesman, made no claim to any of the lands sold below the Vermillion, is strong accumulative proof of the assertion afterwards made by Harrison to Tecumseh, that any claims of his tribe to the lands on the Wabash were without foundation.⁶

The personal admirers and intimate associates of Harrison, were, of course, overjoyed. They were no doubt influenced to some extent by the fact that another long lease of power was in sight. Their leader's victory would inure to their own benefit. Still, there were no cravens among them. A banquet followed, participated in by a number of the leading citizens of the town and adjacent country. Judge Henry Vanderburgh, of the Territorial Court, presided, and toasts were drunk to the treaty, Governor Harrison, his secretary Peter Jones, and "the honest interpreter," Joseph Barron. Of those present on that occasion, some were afterwards officers at Tippecanoe, and one, Thomas Randolph, fell at the side of his chief.⁷

There were those, however, who were not to be silenced by the governor's triumph. The political battles of that time were extremely vitriolic, and the fights over territorial politics had been filled with hate. Certain foes of the governor not only appeared in Knox county, but eventually in the halls of the National Congress, and there were those who did not hesitate to question the governor's integrity. Among those who bitterly opposed Harrison was one William McIntosh, "a Scotchman of large property at Vincennes, who had been for many years hostile to the governor, and who was not believed to be very partial to the government of the United States." One John Small made an affidavit before Judge Benjamin Parke that prior to the year 1805, McIntosh had been upon good terms with Harrison, but that Harrison's advocacy of a representative government for the Territory, or its advancement to the second grade, had turned him into an enemy. However this may be, Harrison and his friends, in order to vindicate his fame at home and abroad, now resolved to bring an action for damages in the terri-

⁶ *Report of American Ethnology. Handbook of American Indians. Part I.* 212.

⁷ Vincennes *Western Sun*, Oct. 21, 1809.

torial courts against McIntosh "for having asserted that he had cheated the Indians, in the last treaty which had been made with them at Fort Wayne." The suit being brought to issue, it was found that of the territorial judges then on the bench, one, probably Judge Vanderburgh, was a personal friend of the governor's, and one a personal friend of McIntosh. These gentlemen, therefore, both retired, and the Honorable Waller Taylor, who had recently come into the territory, assumed the ermine. A jury was selected by the court naming two elisors, who in turn selected a panel of forty-eight persons, from which the plaintiff and defendant each struck twelve, and from the remaining twenty-four the jury was drawn by lot. With this "struck jury" the cause proceeded to a hearing. The following account, given in *Dawson's Harrison*, will prove of interest:

Before a crowded audience, this interesting trial was continued from 10 a. m. till one o'clock at night. Every person concerned in the Indian Department, or who could know anything of the circumstances of the late treaty at Fort Wayne, was examined, and every latitude that was asked for, or attempted by the defendant, in the examination permitted. Finding that the testimony of all the witnesses went to prove the justice and integrity of the governor's conduct in relation to everything connected with the Indian Department, the defendant began to ask questions relating to some points of his civil administration. To this the jury as well as the court objected, the latter observing that it was necessary that the examination should be confined to the matter at issue. But at the earnest request of the governor the defendant was permitted to pursue his own course and examine the witnesses upon every point which he might think proper. The defendant's counsel abandoning all idea of justification, pleaded only for a mitigation of damages. After a retirement of one hour the jury returned a verdict of \$4,000 damages. To pay this sum, a large amount of the defendant's lands were exposed for sale, and in the governor's absence in the command of the army the ensuing year, was bought in by his agent. Two-thirds of his property has since been returned to McIntosh and the remaining part given to some of the orphan children of those distinguished citizens who fell a sacrifice to their patriotism in the last war.⁸

The head chief of the Weas at this time was Lapoussier, whose name would indicate that he was of French extraction. He arrived at Vincennes on the fifteenth day of October with fifteen warriors and was later followed by Negro Legs, Little Eyes and Shawanoe, who came in with other companies of the tribe. On the twenty-fourth the governor assembled them for the purpose, as he stated, of

⁸ *Dawson's Harrison*, 176.

ascertaining whether they "were in a situation to understand the important business he had to lay before them." He said that he had shut up the liquor casks, but that he found that his proclamation prohibiting the sale of liquor had been disobeyed. He was glad to find, however, that they were sober, and expressed a wish that they would not drink any more while the deliberations were in progress. On the twenty-fifth he explained fully all the provisions of the Treaty of Fort Wayne, the benefit the Weas would derive from an increase in their annuities, and their removal from the vicinity of the settlements to the neighborhood of their brothers, the Miamis, who lived farther up the river. He also told them that they would be granted the same amount of goods in hand received by the larger tribes, on account of the inconvenience they would suffer by moving from their present habitations. The governor's conduct in refusing to negotiate while any evidences of liquor were manifest was in strict keeping with his attitude at Fort Wayne, and his generous treatment of a smaller and weaker tribe certainly redounds to his credit. The Treaty of Fort Wayne was duly ratified and approved on the twenty-sixth of October, 1809, and the convention was signed by Lapoussier and all the Wea chieftains without a single dissent.⁹

Only one tribe now remained who had any manner of claim to any of the lands in the Wabash Valley. This tribe was the Kickapoos, who lived at the mouth of the Vermillion river and in that part of Indiana now comprising practically all of Vermillion county and parts of Warren and Parke. Accordingly a treaty was concluded with them at Vincennes on the ninth of December, 1809, whereby they fully ratified all the proceedings at Fort Wayne, and further ceded to the United States "all that tract of land which lies above the tract above ceded (the north line of which was Raccoon creek), the Wabash, the Vermillion river, and a line to be drawn from the north corner of said ceded tract, so as to strike the Vermillion river at the distance of twenty miles in a direct line from its mouth." Among the interesting names attached as witnesses to the articles is that of Hyacinthe Lasselle.

THE PROPHET AND THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT.

The confederacy then, was established upon a priesthood. Let us regard the priest. He was a character remarkable enough to

⁹ *Treaty of 1809. Official Proceedings* (State Library), 23-24; also *United States Statute at Large—Indian Treaties*, Boston, 1856, 116.

invite the attention of all the leading men of that day, including Jefferson. He was subtle and crafty enough to delude Harrison into the belief that he might be a friend instead of a foe.

The account related by Simon Kenton, and vouched for by John Johnston and Anthony Shane, is that Tecumseh, Laulewasikaw, the Prophet, and a third brother, Kumskaukau, were triplets; that Tecumseh was the youngest or last born of the three; that "this event so extraordinary among the Indian tribes, with whom a double birth is quite uncommon, struck the mind of the people as supernatural, and marked him and his brothers with the prestige of future greatness—that the Great Spirit would direct them to the achievement of something great." The date of this extraordinary event is given by most authors as 1768, making Tecumseh and the Prophet some five years the seniors of General Harrison. "They were born in a cabin or hut, constructed of round saplings chinked with sticks and clay, near the mouth of Stillwater, on the upper part of its junction with the Great Miami, then a pleasant plateau of land, with a field of corn not subject to overflow."¹⁰

Of the early life of the Prophet not much is known. "According to one account he was noted in his earlier years for stupidity and intoxication; but one day, while lighting his pipe in his cabin, he fell back apparently lifeless and remained in that condition until his friends had assembled for the funeral, when he revived from his trance, quieted their alarm, and announced that he had been conducted to the spirit world."¹¹ As an orator, he is said to have been even more powerful than Tecumseh himself, and his great influence in after years among the various tribes would seem to bear that statement out. However, he was boastful, arrogant, at times cruel, and never enjoyed the reputation for honesty and integrity that his more distinguished brother did. In personal appearance he was not prepossessing. He had lost one eye, "which defect he concealed by wearing a dark veil or handkerchief over the disfigured organ." It has been related that he was dominated to some extent by his wife, who was regarded by the Squaws at the Prophet's Town as a queen.¹²

Whole nations are at times moved with a sort of religious fervor or frenzy which extends to all ranks and stations. During

¹⁰ *A Chapter from History of the War of 1812*, Col. William Stanley Hatch.

¹¹ *Report of Bureau of American Ethnology. Handbook of American Indians*, II, 729.

¹² *Archives of Aboriginal Knowledge*. H. R. Schoolcraft, 353.

these periods strange mental phenomena are at time apparent, great social and political movements are inaugurated, and the whole complexion of affairs seems to undergo a rapid and sometimes radical change. Such a movement occurred among the Indian tribes of Ohio and those along the Wabash about the beginning of the year 1806. At this time a part of the scattered and broken remnants of the Shawnee tribe had been gathered together under the Prophet and Tecumseh at Greenville, Ohio. In November of the year before the Prophet had "assembled a considerable number of Shawnees, Wyandots, Ottawaws and Senecas, at Wapakoneta, on the Auglaize river, when he unfolded to them the new character with which he was clothed, and made his first public effort in that career of religious imposition, which in a few years was felt by the remote tribes of the upper lakes, and on the broad plains which stretch beyond the Mississippi."¹³ The appearance of the Prophet was not only highly dramatic but extremely well-timed. The savage mind was filled with gloomy forebodings. The ravages of "fire-water," the intermixture of the races, the trespassing of the white settlers on the Indian domain, and the rapid disappearance of many of the old hunting grounds, all betokened a sad destiny for the red man. Naturally superstitious, he was prepared for the advent of some divine agency to help him in his distress. No one understood this better than the Prophet. He may have been the dupe of his own imposture, but imposters are generally formidable. He was no longer Laulewasikaw, but Tenskwatawa, "The Open Door." "He affected great sanctity; did not engage in the secular duties of war or hunting; was seldom in public; devoted most of his time to fasting, the interpretation of dreams, and offering sacrifices to spiritual powers; pretended to see into futurity and to foretell events, and announced himself to be the mouth-piece of God."¹⁴

The first assemblage at Wapakoneta, was later followed by a series of pilgrimages to Greenville, which shortly spread alarm among the white settlers. Hundreds of savages flocked around the new seer from the rivers and lakes of the Northwest and even from beyond the Mississippi. In May of 1807 great numbers passed and repassed through Fort Wayne. To all these gatherings the Prophet preached the new propaganda. He denounced drunkenness, and said that he had gone up into the clouds and had seen the abode of the

¹³ *Drake's Life of Tecumseh*, 86.

¹⁴ *Archives of Aboriginal Knowledge*. H. R. Schoolcraft, 353-355.

Devil; that there he saw all the drunkards and that flames of fire continually issued from their mouths, and that all who used liquor in this world would suffer eternal torment in the next; he advocated a return to pristine habits and customs, counseling the tribes "to throw away their flints and steels, and resort to their original mode of obtaining fire by percussion. He denounced the woolen stuffs as not equal to skins for clothing; he commended the use of the bow and arrow. As to intermarriage between the races, all this was prohibited. The two races were distinct and must remain so. Neither could there be any separate or individual ownership of any of the Indian lands; these were the common heritage of all. The weak, aged and infirm were to be cherished and protected; parental authority was to be obeyed. In conclusion, he never failed to proclaim that the Great Spirit had gifted him with the divine power to "cure all diseases and to arrest the hand of death, in sickness, or on the battlefield."

The fame of the Prophet soon aroused the jealousy of many of the neighboring chiefs and medicine men. They saw their power dwindling away and their authority diminishing. They took steps to check the advancing tide of fanaticism, but were at once adroitly met by the introduction of an inquisition into witchcraft, which had been almost universally believed in by the tribes, but against which, the Prophet now hurled the most direful anathemas. He declared that any one who dealt in magic or "medicine juggleries" should never taste of future happiness, and must be instantly put to death. His deluded and awe-struck followers promptly began a systematic searching out and persecution of "witches," and all under his personal direction. The finger of the seer often pointed at a prominent warrior or chieftain, or some member of their household. The Prophet's mere denunciation was proof enough. The victim went to the torture of death by fire, or some other fate equally revolting. Among the Delawares, especially, the most shocking cruelty ensued, and finally these things came to the ears of the governor at Vincennes. He immediately sent a "speech" by special messenger to the headsmen and chiefs of the Delaware tribe, beseeching them to cast aside all fallacious doctrines, to denounce the Prophet and to drive him out of their midst. In the course of this "speech" he said: "Demand of him some proofs at least of his being the messenger of the Deity. If God has really employed him, He has doubtless authorized him to perform miracles that he may be known and received as a prophet.

If he is really a prophet, ask of him to cause the sun to stand still, the moon to alter its course, the rivers to cease to flow, or the dead to rise from their graves.”¹⁵

The language of the Governor proved to be unfortunate. On June 16, 1806, there was a total eclipse of the sun in northern latitudes for a period of about five minutes, at about a half an hour before midday, and this event had long been heralded by the astronomers of that time, and had come to the ears of the Prophet through intercourse with some white friends. The crafty savage was not slow to act. He told his followers that on a certain fixed day, and at a time when the sun was at the height of its power, he would place the same under his feet, and cause darkness to come over the face of the earth. On the day announced the Prophet stood among his fearful band awaiting the hour. The day was wholly clear and without clouds, but at the appointed time the terrified savages saw a disc of blackness gradually pass over the face of the sun; the birds became agitated and flew to cover; the skulking dogs drew near their masters; almost absolute darkness fell on all about; the stars of heaven appeared in the zenith, and in the midst of it all, the Prophet exclaimed: “Did I not testify truly? Behold! Darkness has shrouded the sun.”¹⁶ The account of that day, faithfully set forth by J. Fennimore Cooper, then a youth, is filled with strange relations of the unnatural appearance of all earthly things; of the sudden awe and fear that came into the minds of all; how women stood near their husbands in silence and children clung to their mothers in terror, and if these were the emotions experienced in a civilized community, made fully aware of the coming event, what must have been the impression produced on the superstitious mind of the savage, wholly unenlightened in the ways of science? From that day, the power of the savage Prophet was secure until the spell of his magic was forever broken by Harrison’s soldiers at Tippecanoe.

It is not certain at what period in his career the Prophet was tempted by British gold and British overtures. President Jefferson once wrote to John Adams as follows: “I thought there was little danger in his making proselytes from the habits and comforts they had learned from the whites, to the hardships and privations of savagism, and no great harm if he did. But his followers increased until the British thought him worth corrupting, and found him cor-

¹⁵ *Eggleston's Tecumseh*, 119.

¹⁶ *Eggleston's Tecumseh*, 121.

ruptible.”¹⁷ Neither is it certain at what precise period Tecumseh put his brother-priest behind him and assumed the lead. That he had cunningly pretended to have great respect and reverence while the Prophet was practicing on the superstition of the tribes; that he took no steps to stop the inquisitions which were destroying the influence of the chiefs and medicine men; that he stood ready at the opportune moment to push the brother-priest into the back-ground and form a confederacy with himself as the recognized head, will not now admit of controversy.

In 1806 Tecumseh was about thirty-eight years of age, a finished athlete, a renowned hunter, and of great reputation as a bold and fearless orator. Probably no red man ever born had a better knowledge of the various treaties that had been consummated between the races. “For all those qualities which elevate man far above his race; for talent, tact, skill, bravery as a warrior; for high-minded, honorable and chivalrous bearing as a man; in fine, for all those elements of greatness which place him a long way above his fellows in savage life, the name and fame of Tecumseh will go down to posterity in the West, as one of the most celebrated of the aborigines of this continent.” This is the estimate of Judge Law.¹⁸

In his youth he had been under the tutelage of his elder brother Cheeseekau, who taught him “a love for the truth, a contempt of everything mean and sordid and the practice of those cardinal Indian virtues, courage in battle and fortitude in suffering.” In one of the early Shawnee raids along the Ohio he had witnessed the burning of a white man at the stake; the scene was so horrifying to him that he made his associates promise never to torture another prisoner. The spoils of the hunt he divided with the aged and unfortunate. At the time of the Prophet's rise he had already matched his prowess in battle against such men as Simon Kenton and his associates and had proven both his skill as a tactician and his courage as a fighter.

An illustration of Tecumseh's chivalry toward his foes is pleasingly set forth in Smith's *Historical Sketches of Old Vincennes*:

Early in the year 1811, Governor Harrison, with a view to ascertaining the cause of the dissatisfaction of the Prophet, and, if possible, pacify him, deputed one of his most sagacious and trusty advisers with a competent interpreter to hold a council with him and his chiefs, embracing his

¹⁷ Eggleston's *Tecumseh*, 114-115.

¹⁸ John Law, *History of Old Vincennes*, 75.

brother warrior chief, Tecumseh. It is learned from history that these gentlemen arrived at the village one evening and were received in an apparently friendly manner by the Prophet and assigned a tent for the night with an agreed appointment for a council the next morning. It is said the Prophet's wife was considered a queen among the Indian women, as well as by her husband. Before retiring for the night the interpreter observed an unusual stir among the squaws, and motions made toward their tent, and caught menacing glances and gestures toward them, and so told the ambassador, but he made light of the matter and the interpreter's suspicions that treachery was intended, and when night came on he was soon asleep in peace and quiet. But not so with the vigilant interpreter who kept awake and had his guns near at hand. About midnight a tap was heard at the door and his name, in a Shawnee language, was called. He found Tecumseh at the door. He had called to warn him of impending assassination by the Queen and squaws, who had held a council and determined on their death in spite of the protests of himself and others who told them it would be base treachery to kill messengers of peace who were their visitors. He told the visitors to rise and go with him. They went silently through the village and down into a wooded ravine near the river, where a noise was made as if to call wild turkeys, sounds well recognized by all hunters in early days; an answer was returned, and soon two men appeared with the ambassador's horses which they speedily mounted and rode swiftly away, accompanied by the two guides furnished by Tecumseh, and were soon well on their return trip to Vincennes.¹⁹

No true portrait of this celebrated Indian is in existence. The following graphic description of him, however, is given by Stanley Hatch, who had a personal acquaintance with him in times of peace:

The general appearance of this remarkable man was uncommonly fine. His height was about five feet nine inches, judging him by my own height when standing close to him, and corroborated by the late Col. John Johnston, for many years Indian agent at Piqua. His face oval rather than angular; his nose handsome and straight; his mouth beautifully formed, like that of Napoleon I, as represented in his portraits; his eyes clear, transparent hazel, with a mild, pleasant expression when in repose, or in conversation; but when excited in his orations or by the enthusiasm of a conflict, or when in anger, they appeared like balls of fire; his teeth beautifully white, and his complexion more of a light brown or tan than red; his whole tribe as well as their kindred the Ottawaws had light complexions; his arms and hands were finely formed; his limbs straight; he always stood very erect and walked with a brisk, elastic, vigorous step; invariably dressed in Indian tanned buckskin; a perfectly well fitting hunting frock descending to the knee, and over his under clothes of the same material; the usual cape and finish of yellow fringe about the neck; cape, edges of the front opening and bottom of the frock; a belt of the same material in which were his side arms (an elegant silver-mounted toma-

¹⁹ H. M. Smith, *Historical Sketches of Old Vincennes*, 264-265.

hawk and a knife in a strong leather case); short pantaloons connected with neatly fitting leggins and moccasins with a mantle of the same material thrown over his left shoulder, used as a blanket in camp and as a protection in storms. Such was his dress when I last saw him, on the 17th of August, 1812, on the streets of Detroit; mutually exchanging tokens of recognition with former acquaintances in years of peace, and passing on, he, to see that his Indians had all crossed to Malden, as commanded, and to counsel with his white allies in regard to the next movement of the now really commenced War of 1812. He was then in the prime of life, and presented in his appearance and noble bearing one of the finest looking men I have ever seen.²⁰

The striking circumstances of his birth, the ascendancy of his brother, the Prophet; his burning hatred of the white race; his skill as a hunter and valor as a warrior; above all his wonderful eloquence and thorough knowledge of all the Indian treaties of the past, gave Tecumseh an influence and authority among the tribes far beyond that of any of the braves or sachems of that day. If at the first his imagination had not dared to scale the heights of power, he later boldly threw aside all disguise, and by his powerful advocacy of a communistic ownership of all the Indian lands by the tribes in common, he aimed a blow both at the ancient authority claimed by the Indian chieftains, and at the validity of every treaty ever negotiated between the two races of men. The sum and substance of Tecumseh's doctrine is thus succinctly stated by Judge Law:

That the Great Spirit had given the Indians all their lands in common to be held by them as such and not by the various tribes who had settled on portions of it—claiming it as their own. That they were mere squatters having no "pre-emption right," but holding even that on which they lived as mere "tenants in common" with all the other tribes. That this mere possession gave them no title to convey the land without the consent of all. That no single tribe had the right to sell, that the power to sell was not vested in their chief, but must be the act of the warriors in council assembled of all the tribes, as the land belonged to all—no portion of it to any single tribe.²¹

If these tenets were to hold, it was clear that any authority claimed by the chiefs to represent their respective tribes in the sale or barter of any of the Indian domain was without foundation; that any treaty not negotiated and ratified by a common council of all the warriors of all the tribes, was null and void; that Wayne's Treaty of 1795 was *nullum pactum*; that the claim of the white settlers to

²⁰ Wm. Stanley Hatch, *A Chapter of the History of the War of 1812*, 113-115.

²¹ John Law, *History of Vincennes*, 81.

any of the lands north of the Ohio was without force, and that they were trespassers and mere licensees from the beginning. The doctrine thus enunciated was not entirely new. Tarhe, or the Crane, Chief of the Wyandots, had announced at Greenville: "I now tell you, that no one in particular can justly claim this ground; it belongs, in common, to us all; no earthly being has an exclusive right to it."²² But the plausible eloquence of Tecumseh, coming at a time when the star of the red man was setting; when every passing day witnessed the encroachment of the white settlers, gave a new ray of hope to the fainting tribes. The warriors, carried away by the dreams and incantations of the Prophet, and sustained by the burning words of a new leader, who promised them a restoration of their former glory, cast aside with contempt all the articles and solemn agreements of the past, and were ready to take up the tomahawk in patriotic defense of their lands and homes. Thus did Tecumseh look forward to the establishment of "a great and permanent confederation—an empire of red men, of which he should be the leader and emperor."

²² John Dillon, *History of Indiana*, 361.